

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSCE-00 PM-03 SP-02 L-01
HA-02 PA-01 INR-05 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 DODE-00 EB-04
INRE-00 SSO-00 /043 W
-----130174 081435Z /53

O 081409Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9371
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 7387

LIMDIS

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SHUM, CO
SUBJ: ELECTIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS: CONVERSATION BETWEEN
BOLIVIAN PRESIDENT PEREDA AND ASST SECRETARY VAKY

1. ASST SECY VAKY MET LATE YESTERDAY (AUGUST 7) WITH BOLIVIAN PRESIDENT PEREDA AT BOLIVIAN EMBASSY HERE. ALSO PRESENT AT DISCUSSION WERE MINISTER OF COMMERCE EDWIN TAPIA, BOLIVIAN AMBASSADOR TO COLOMBIA OJARA AGREDA, AMB ASENSIO, AND POL COUNS EMB BOGOTA.

2. VAKY OPENED CONVERSATION BY REFERRING TO PEREDA'S PUBLIC STATEMENT OF AUGUST 6, PROMISING THAT PROGRESS TOWARD DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT WOULD CONTINUE AND THAT ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD AT AN EARLY DATE. HE ADDED THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THIS DATE WOULD BE WITHIN NEXT TWO YEARS.

3. PEREDA REPLIED THAT TWO YEARS WAS THE MAXIMUM PERIOD FOR TURNING OVER POWER SO THAT ELECTIONS MIGHT COME AT AN EARLIER POINT. FURTHERMORE, HIS COMMITMENT TO HOLD ELECTIONS HAD THE SUPPORT OF THE ARMED FORCES. NEVERTHELESS, HE CAUTIONED, TIME WAS NEEDED TO PREPARE THE WAY, SINCE APPROPRIATE CONDITIONS FOR
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FRAUD-FREE ELECTIONS DID NOT NOW EXIST. THE PRESENT ELECTORAL SYSTEM WAS CUMBERSOME, THE POLITICAL PARTIES WERE DISCREDITED, AND CHANGES WOULD HAVE TO BE EFFECTED WITH RESPECT TO BOTH SYSTEM AND PARTIES; ALSO, A NEW VOTER'S LIST WOULD HAVE TO BE DRAWN UP. IN THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC AREA, TOO, MUCH NEEDED TO BE DONE; THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE CITY AND THE COUNTRYSIDE, BETWEEN RICH AND POOR, SHOULD BE REDUCED. IN THE LATTER REGARD,

HE ADDED, U.S. AID COULD PLAY A MAJOR ROLE.

4. VAKY SAID HE WAS GLAD TO HAVE PEREDA'S ASSURANCES WITH RESPECT TO THE HOLDING OF ELECTIONS WITHIN THE NEXT TWO YEARS. THE GOC HAD SHOWN COMMENDABLE RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS SINCE THE RECENT ELECTIONS, AND THIS FACT WOULD MAKE IT EASIER FOR THE USG TO CONTINUE CLOSE RELATIONS WITH BOLIVIA. VAKY URGED THAT THE GOB ALSO SEEK FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM THE IMF AND IDB.

5. TAPIA OBSERVED THAT, IF ELECTIONS WERE HELD BEFORE THE NECESSARY CONDITIONS HAD BEEN CREATED, THE RESULT WOULD BE ANOTHER FAILURE AND A FURTHER LOSS OF CONFIDENCE IN THE DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM ON THE PART OF THE BOLIVIAN PEOPLE. OJARA AVERRED THAT THE ARMED FORCES HAD NO INTEREST IN REMAINING INDEFINITELY IN POWER BUT FELT THAT THEY HAD A MISSION TO CARRY OUT, THAT OF INSTILLING POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE MASSES.

6. IN CONCLUSION, VAKY POINTED OUT THAT THE WORLD AND THE U.S., IN PARTICULAR, WERE WATCHING EVENTS IN BOLIVIA. THE USG, AS A FRIEND OF THE GOB, URGED THAT THERE BE NO DELAY IN EFFECTING A RETURN TO DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT. IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR THE GOB, NOW THAT IT WAS COMMITTED TO ELECTIONS, TO DO NOTHING THAT MIGHT DEROGATE FROM ITS CREDIBILITY. SO LONG AS THRE PROCESS CONTINUED UNINTERRUPTED, THE USG WULD DO WHAT IT COULD TO HELP.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HUMAN RIGHTS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, ELECTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 08 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BOGOTA07387
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780324-0439
Format: TEL
From: BOGOTA
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780884/aaaacsrq.tel
Line Count: 86
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 91f66d66-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1797838
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ELECTIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS: CONVERSATION BETWEEN BOLIVIAN PRESIDENT PEREDA AND ASST SECRETARY VAKY
TAGS: PINT, SHUM, CO, US, BL, (VAKY, VIRON P), (PEREDA ASBUN, JUAN)
To: STATE LA PAZ
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/91f66d66-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014